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ABSTRACT

The project described brings together three different problems in education. First, there is the frequently cited need for better-trained teachers. The second problem is the school district's constant requirement for competent substitute teachers. The third problem is the need for closer ties between the school district and a local university. The program at the University of Bridgeport helps to alleviate all three concerns, as evidence from five years of experience attests to its effectiveness. In a cooperative arrangement between the university and several school districts, graduate students are assigned as substitute teachers in specific school buildings for the academic year. They are given training workshops and seminars throughout their field experience and are supervised by university faculty for evaluating their level of functioning and their progress. As candidates for the teaching profession, these interns are perceived as having the best training and the best experience, and they are given higher performance ratings by educators in comparison to the regular substitute teachers, the apprenticed teachers, or the student teachers. (Author)

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A NEW MODEL IN TEACHER TRAINING

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The project described herein brings together three different problems in education. First, there is the frequently cited need for better-trained teachers. The second problem is the school district's constant requirement for competent substitute teachers. The third problem is the need for closer ties between the school district and a local university. The program at the University of Bridgeport helps to alleviate all three concerns, as evidence from five years of experience attests to its effectiveness. In a cooperative arrangement between the university and several school districts, graduate students are assigned as substitute teachers in specific school buildings for the academic year. They are given training workshops and seminars throughout their field experience and are supervised by university faculty for evaluating their level of functioning and their progress. As candidates for the teaching profession, these Interns are perceived as having the best training and the best experience, and they are given higher performance ratings by educators in comparison to the regular substitute teachers, the apprenticed teachers, or the student teachers.

A NEW MODEL IN TEACHER TRAINING

Louise M. Soares

Introduction

There are two common methods in teacher-training programs for providing field experience, which is both a culmination of the professional training track and a prelude to the first classroom job: (1) The University Model and (2) the Apprenticeship Model. The University Model has become the traditional method for providing a culminating experience which we continue to call "student teaching." The typical scenario in training prospective teachers is to require students to take a specified number of courses--whether proceeding through a normal-school arrangement or by way of academic departments--and then ending with student teaching. It is a learning-by-doing approach to acquiring the craft in that the student teacher is usually placed in the classroom of an experienced teahcer and is visited by a supervisor from the local university.

The Apprenticeship Model--though much older than the University Model--was practiced under earlier pedagogical plans, fell in disfavor, but has recently experienced a revival in such states as New Jersey and New York. It also is a learning-by-doing approach, but the trainer is the school system rather than the university. The prospective teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree but typically have not taken any Education

courses and, therefore, no student teaching. They are assigned to a master teacher in the district who is responsible for supervising, evaluating and introducing the candidate in the ways of the classroom.

There is a third method which is patterned after the medical internship method and which is the basis for the university program in teacher training to be described here. This third method combines the best of the two methods traditionally used but provides more effective training than either of the other approaches can do alone.

The Training Program

Individuals who have completed a Baccalaureate in any field and who can qualify under the criteria for graduate admission are interviewed first at the university for possible placement in the Internship Program. A subsequent interview with a school system's coordinator results in a home base for the academic year; and for most Interns this means that they accept substitute teaching assignments in one building throughout the year.

The Interns are trained to take over a variety of classrooms, to follow the instructions left by the teacher, and to fill in when necessary. They are expected to work from September, soon after classes begin, through June when the school year ends. They are encouraged to attend staff meetings, observe conferences, participate in school fairs and other functions.

All Interns attend University classes after school--late afternoon, evening, Saturday, or in weekend workshops, summer seminars. They are given an intensive training seminar the first week for obtaining "survival skills." Other training workshops are held periodically throughout the semester for continuing preparation in the major disciplines and for discussion of issues and problems. The year's schedule is contained in Figure 1.

Faculty members from the university who are trained observers and who have some experience in pre-university classrooms, as well as public school teachers who have recently retired or who have taken a leave of absence, are used to supervise the Interns several times during the year, to conduct seminars for sharing concerns and successful techniques, and to consult building administrators for professional and evaluative discussion. They also oversee the Interns' outreach efforts--compiling handbooks, writing newsletters, or creating software for either their own classes and students or other Inters who would follow.

On days when no teachers are absent from a given building, Interns serve as tutors, classroom aides, small-group instructors, or as administrative assistants working on curriculum revision, identification of children requiring special education, or in program-writing for computer utilization. Interns in the special subjects--e.g., music, art, physical education, special education--are placed as all-district subs and fill in wherever needed.

In return for this service, the school districts pay the university for each Intern in their schools the funds for 33 hours of graduate study taken from September through August--including supervision credit for the Interns' clinical experience, and a bi-monthly stipend for expenses (books, transportation, lab fees, etc.)

For those seeking initial teacher certification, the Interns are placed with a master teacher in a six-week summer program working in the more traditional mode of student teaching and at the level/subject where they would subsequently apply for teacher certification. Those seeking licensure in school counseling or school psychology may use thei substitute teaching experience for evidence of understanding the public schools and are given additional opportunities for experience in their majors--e.g., college applications of high school seniors, testing, discussion groups, etc.

Research Design

In order to determine the relative effectiveness of this new method of teacher-training, a research plan was developed that involved self-perceptions, perceptions of others, and performance ratings in a comparative study of the Interns with regular substitute teachers, student teachers, and apprenticing teachers. The results are indicated in Table 1.

When comparing Self as a Person, there were no significant differences among any of the neophytes or in the ratings they received (as persons) from the university staff or the building principals.

When comparing Self as a Teacher, the self-perceptions of the Interns were significantly lower at the pretest level than any of the other groups of teachers in training or the regular substitute teachers. These differences at the pretest level had statistically disappeared by the time of the posttest, indicating that the upward shift of the Interns from the pretest to the posttest resulted in confidence as a professional. The university staff and the building principals saw the Interns making the most significant changes over the academic year in their function as teacher.

When comparing the performance ratings, the Interns were seen as much more effective in the classroom by the time the final ratings were obtained (May)--with the comparisons being significantly higher for all except the high school principals.

Significance

This is the fifth year of the program. It was created in September of 1981 with 18 Interns in one school district. It has since grown to 121 Interns in 11 school districts. This growth pattern is noted in Figure 2. Obviously, the school districts see many distinct benefits:

1. Providing substitutes who are continuing staff members
2. Providing substitutes for last-minute situations
3. Providing substitutes to fill in for PPTs and parent conferences
4. Enabling substitutes to work with the classroom teachers before and after a scheduled absence

5. Providing a continuing relationship with both staff and children

6. Enabling a school district to "try out" the Intern as a prospective teacher

7. Providing university supervision for the Interns as substitute teachers

The most central advantage is a better product. The Interns are trained for subbing and are continually being upgraded; but the Interns are also trained to teach--everything. So the interdisciplinary nature of their function is carried over into their own teaching. The experience is intensive; but at the end of the year, their ability to survive many different situations usually makes them stronger candidates for the profession. As such, it is a viable alternative route to certification. The program is similar to the medical model in that the Internship period exposes the new professional to a wide range of problems/experiences; the residency is the first full year on the job in a setting of one's choice.

From the Interns' point of view, the experience exposes them to many different teaching styles, learning styles, classroom management approaches, etc., and enables them to develop a flexible competence of their own. It also gives them a chance to discover on their own--and in a relatively short span of time--whether teaching is what they really want to do. There is no long-term commitment of several years in the college classroom, with a few incursions in the field, only to find out --after a long investment of both time and money--that teaching is not for them.

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The Internship Program has provided substantial benefits to the school systems in terms of a pool for substitute teaching with staying power and substance. The experience is intensive; but at the end of the year, the Interns' ability to survive many different situations usually makes them stronger candidates for the profession. In a follow-up to the first two groups of Interns, the first year of teaching--when succeeding the Internship year--is conducted on a much higher level of confidence and competence than is typically found with most other "first-year" teachers. The changes noted in the most positive self-attitudes and the higher ratings of job performance in favor of the Interns, the sense of greater control over their environment, and the increased support for the Interns in their role of substitute teachers (which doubles as a training program) by the staff and the children, suggest a process for change in the ways we train prospective teachers. If our five-year experience with this Medical Intern Model is a valid yardstick, then the higher levels of confidence and competence found--consistently--with our Interns in Education suggest a better way for turning out a better product of TEACHER.

TABLE 1

Comparisons of Interpersonal and Self-Perceptions
of Non-Regular Teaching Staff

Scale Form	Mean Perception Scores (and Standard Deviations)							
	Student Teachers n = 20		Interns n = 30		Substitute Teachers n = 25		Apprentice Teachers n = 15	
	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post	pre	post
1. Self as a Person	29.14 (18.97)	30.02 (17.74)	28.75 (19.86)	29.99 (16.50)	30.34 (18.55)	30.25 (18.92)	28.84 (19.71)	28.90 (18.53)
2. Self as a Teacher	38.58 (17.80)	40.21 (15.01)	30.63 (19.46)	41.17 (13.09)	44.29 (17.11)	43.47 (16.98)	35.36 (19.75)	39.82 (15.73)
3. Ratings from Building Principals	38.56 (18.59)	40.89 (16.07)	37.82 (19.12)	45.83 (15.08)	39.78 (16.60)	39.10 (16.00)	38.99 (17.73)	41.29 (16.22)
4. Ratings from University Faculty	36.82 (17.09)	41.66 (16.08)	36.98 (15.11)	43.70 (10.24)	33.29 (20.15)	31.22 (10.25)	35.14 (18.59)	39.00 (17.73)

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FIGURE 1

Interns' Schedule

Academic Schedule

SCHEDULE A

FALL	SPRING	SUMMER
Preparation Workshops Field Experience 3 Electives	Field Experience 3 Electives	2 Electives (+ Student Teaching, if needed)
15 credits	12 credits	6 credits (+ 6 more for Student teaching)

SCHEDULE B

FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	SPRING
Preparation Workshop Field Exper. 2 Electives	Field Exper. 2 Electives	2 Electives	Field Exper. 2 Electives	Student teaching (if needed)
12 credits	9 credits	6 credits	9 credits	6 credits

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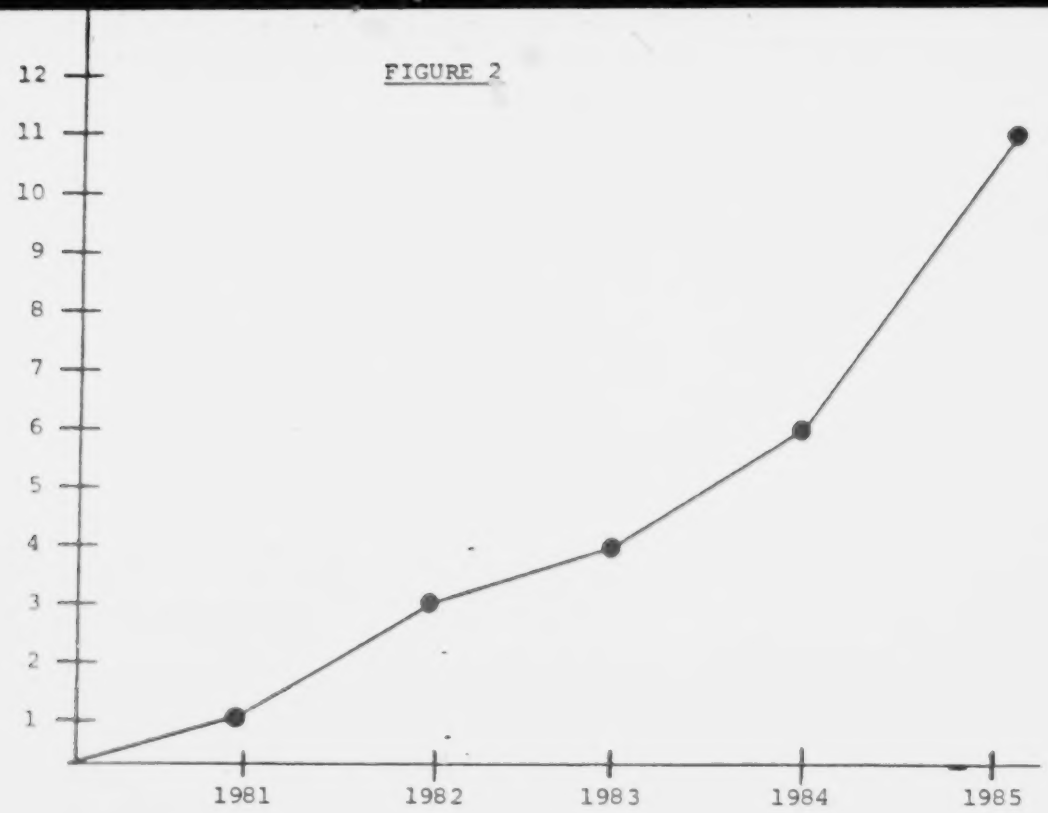
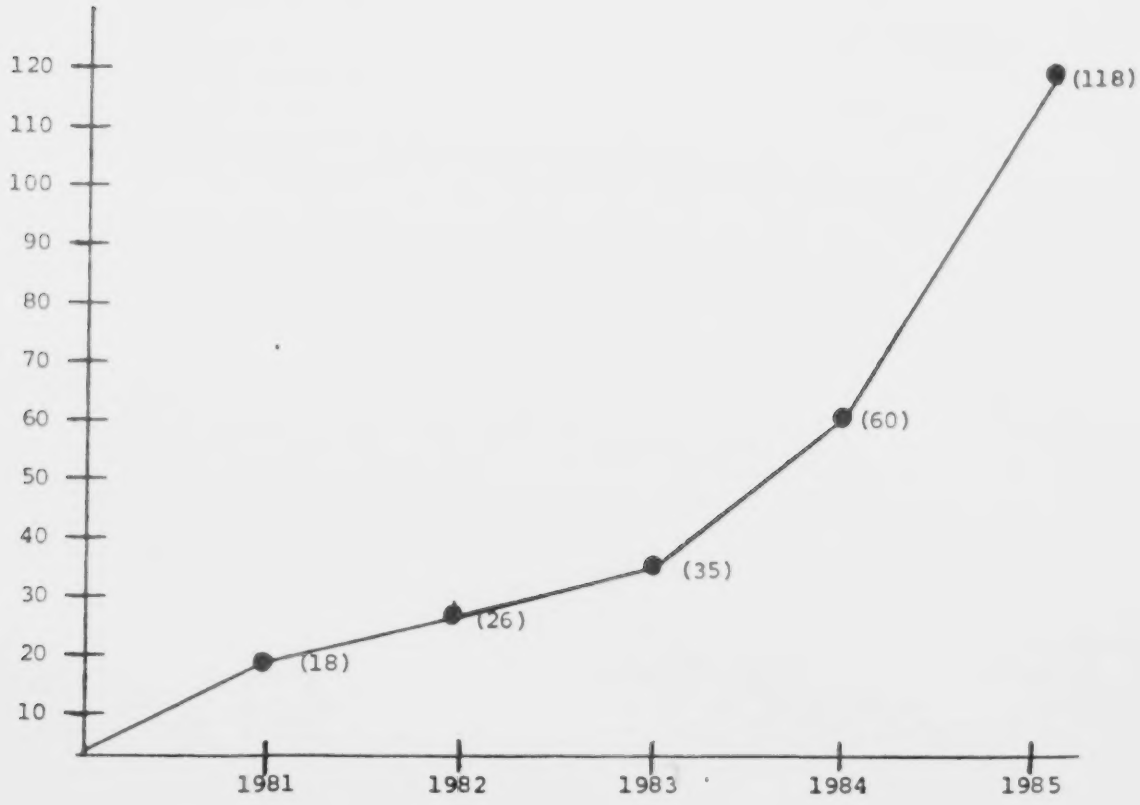
FIGURE 2

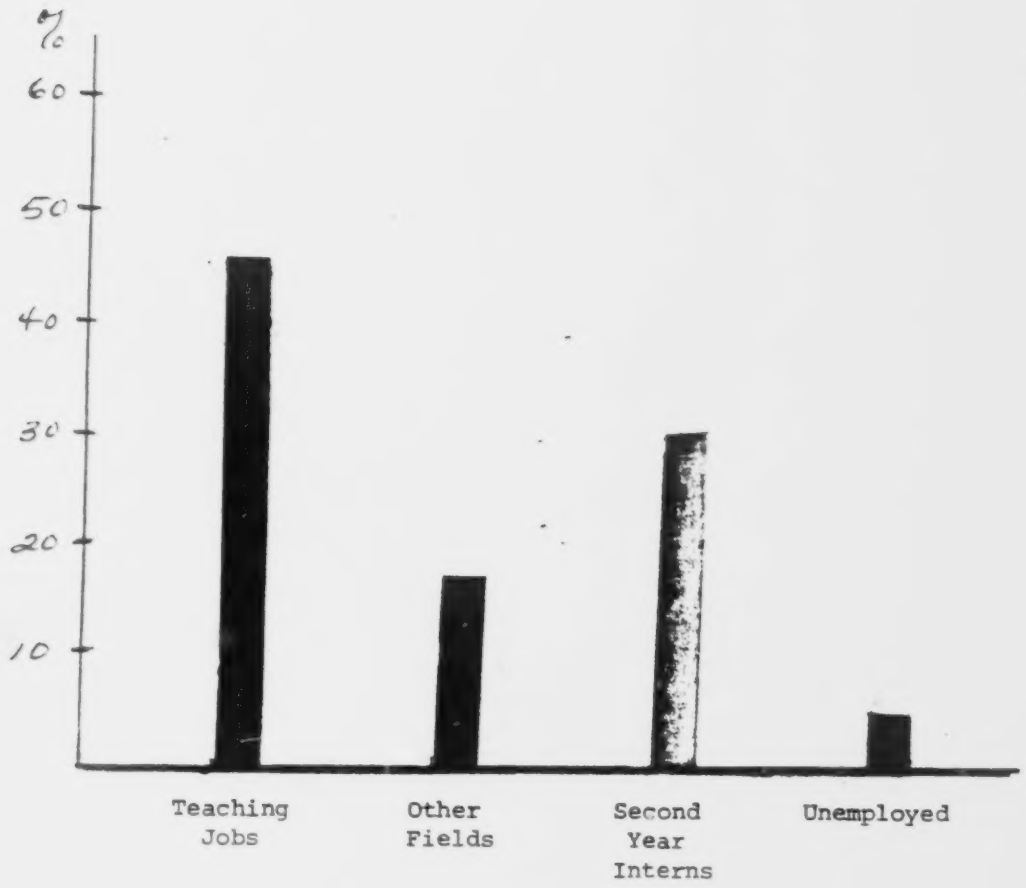


Five-Year Increase in Number of School Districts Participating in the Internship Program.



Five-Year Increase in the Number of Interns

FIGURE 3



1984 - 1985 Intern Follow-Up